

Story map

Teaching strategies for reading comprehension



Best for:

- Year level: 3–9
- Phase of learning: deep

Overview

Description	<p>Students can use a story map to visually represent the way narrative texts are organised at the whole-text level (i.e. the generic structure). Story mapping supports thinking about sequences and important relationships; helps monitor comprehension, retelling and writing; and aids memory.</p> <p>In Years 2–3, students learn typical ways in which episodes are constructed, sequenced (setting, plot, resolution) and linked. In Years 5–9, story maps can be used to consolidate students' knowledge about typical texts and to teach them about increasingly complex plot structures (such as parallel plots, plots in which an event rather than the setting introduces the story and flashbacks).</p>
Learning focus (based on National Literacy Learning Progression)	Comprehension <ul style="list-style-type: none">• recount or describe sequenced events from simple texts (UnT5)• recount or describe the most relevant details from a text (UnT6)• locate information or details embedded in a text (UnT7)• accurately retell a text including most relevant details (UnT8)• summarise the text identifying key details (UnT9)
Teacher preparation	Prepare a story map template appropriate to the age of students and your purpose (e.g. to retell simple plot points). Two examples are provided in the appendices, but also see the Further reading section below.

Suggested implementation

1. Share the text either by reading it to students or having them read it individually or in small groups.
2. Discuss the characters and setting, e.g. Who is the protagonist and their allies? Is there an antagonist or is the obstacle to the main character's success something from nature (the weather, the landscape, etc.)?
3. Discuss the narrator and point of view, e.g. Whose voice do we hear? From whose perspective is the story told? What effect does this have on the reader?
4. Sequence the events in the story, e.g. Why does plot unfold the way it does? How does the story end for various characters? What message might we take from this?
5. Decide on a type of map appropriate to the text and your purpose, e.g. a timeline, a sequenced storyboard, a map of the setting or a web showing relationships between characters. As students become familiar with this strategy they can suggest appropriate ways of representing the story, choose one and explain why they chose it.

6. Students, either individually or in groups, represent their understanding of the selected aspect of the story in drawings and text on a story map. They might, for instance, focus on character relationships or relationships between major and minor events.
7. Share and discuss the maps. For example, Is there agreement on what should be included? Why or why not?
8. After students are familiar with basic story maps, allow them to devise their own visual or diagrammatic representation for various stories they read. Options in SmartArt in Word can be a useful starting point or use more complex mind mapping tools available online.

Variations

- A Provide a picture or map of the setting (e.g. the forest in *Little Red Riding Hood*). Ask students to read or listen to the story and discuss it, then mark where key events occurred. Examine maps provided in some books and discuss the role they can play in aiding comprehension.
- B Create a story map outline as a planning guide for writing. Alternatively, students can draw a map and use it as inspiration for planning their own story.
- C Search online using the key words 'story map organiser' for numerous examples and variations.

Further reading

- For a variety of downloadable story map templates, see the *Reading Rockets* webpage, 'Story maps', www.readingrockets.org/strategies/story_maps.



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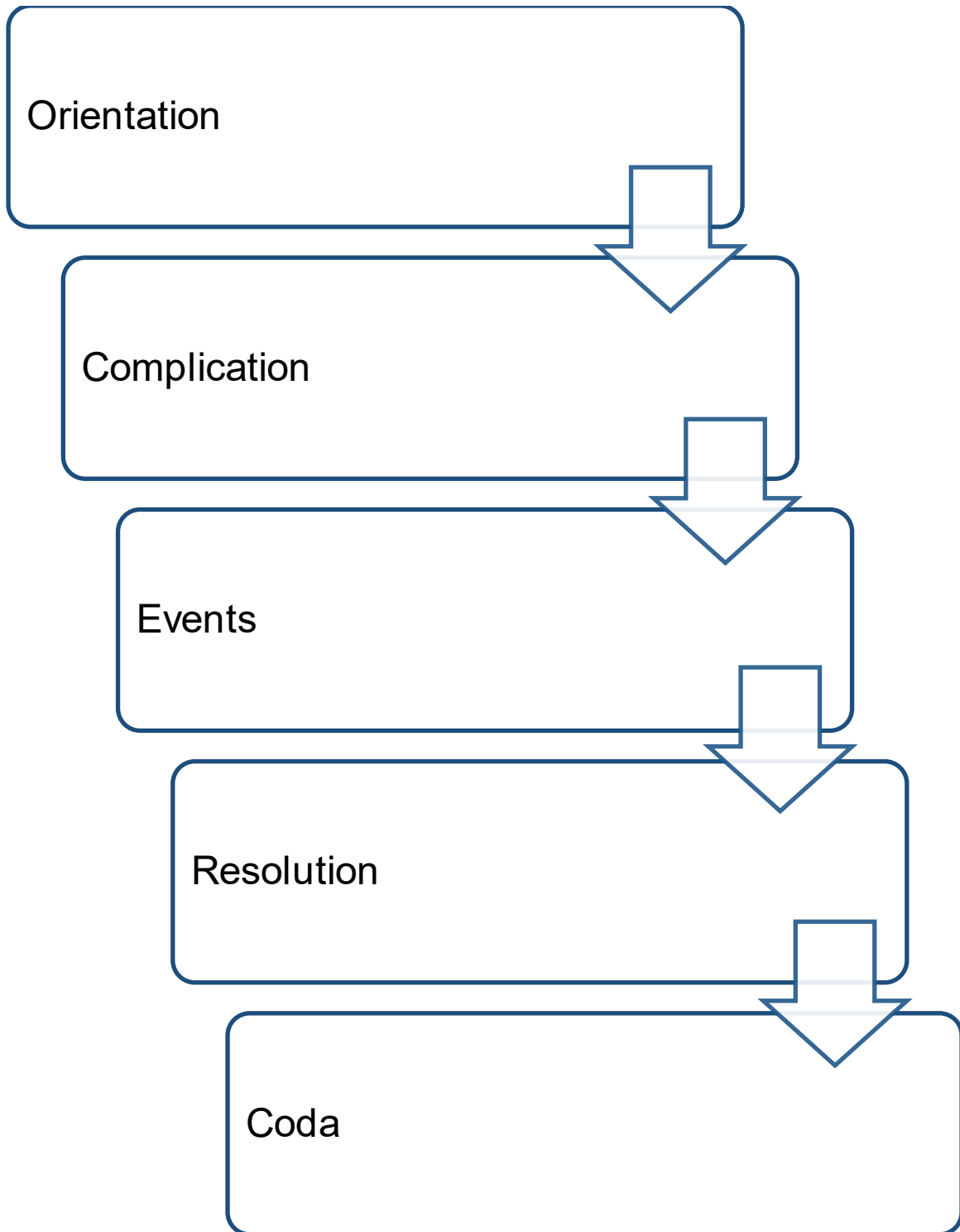
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Appendix 1: Simple story map — timeline style

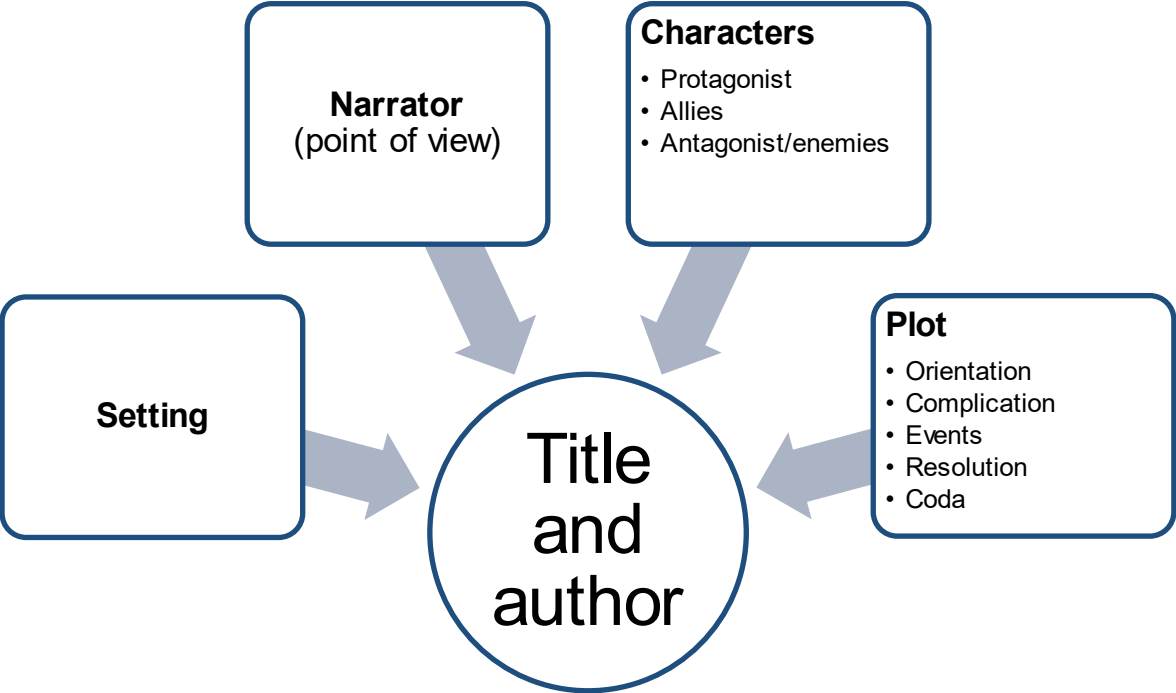


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Appendix 2: Story map — web style



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